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FMCG BRANDS IN THE EXPERIENCE ECONOMY: THE DIGITAL DIMENSION

This article examines the transformation of FMCG brands in the digital environment within the context of the emerging experience economy. It argues that digitalisation shapes the customer experience before physical interaction with the consumer takes place and gives it an immersive character, while competition between brands shifts towards emotional experiences, trust and social interaction. The role of retail brands in building social capital and fostering the population's subjective well-being is explored. The study is based on the hypothesis that developing an immersive customer experience for FMCG brands in the digital environment within the experience economy, implementing sustainable development principles and using digital technologies in marketing programmes increase consumer trust, emotional engagement and loyalty, thereby enhancing brand competitiveness. The methodological framework comprises a systems approach, analysis and synthesis, comparative analysis, content analysis of brand communications, structural and logical analysis, and empirical analysis of marketing programmes. The study analyses the development of an

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FMCG-БРЕНДИ В ЕКОНОМІЦІ ВРАЖЕНЬ: ЦИФРОВИЙ ВИМІР

Досліджено особливості трансформації FMCG брендів у цифровому середовищі в умовах становлення економіки вражень. Обґрунтовано, що під впливом цифровізації клієнтський досвід формується до фізичного контакту зі споживачем і набуває імерсійного характеру, а конкуренція між брендами зміщується у площину емоційних вражень, довіри та соціальної взаємодії. Розкрито роль брендів роздрібної торгівлі як суб'єктів формування соціального капіталу та суб'єктивного благополуччя населення. Дослідження ґрунтується на гіпотезі, що формування імерсійного клієнтського досвіду FMCG брендів у цифровому середовищі в економіці вражень, реалізація принципів сталого розвитку та використання цифрових технологій в маркетингових програмах підвищує рівень довіри, емоційної залученості й лояльності споживачів та, відповідно, конкурентоспроможності брендів. Методологічною базою є системний підхід, методи аналізу і синтезу, порівняльного, контент-аналізу бренд-комунікацій, структурно-логічного та емпіричного аналізу маркетингових програм. У ході дослідження проаналізовано формування

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immersive customer experience for FMCG brands, examines their brand architecture, positioning and social responsibility, and systematises digital marketing programmes according to the 4Cs framework, while outlining the specific features of omnichannel interaction with consumers. The findings indicate that integrating the experience economy, sustainable development principles and digital technologies contributes to increased consumer trust, empathy and loyalty.

Keywords: FMCG brands, experience economy, digital marketing, immersive customer experience, brand architecture, sustainable development, social responsibility, branding, brand management, omnichannel communications, retail, supermarket chains.

імерсійного клієнтського досвіду FMCG брендів, розкрито особливості їх бренд-архітектури, позиціонування та соціальної відповідальності, а також узагальнено цифрові маркетингові програми за інструментами 4C і специфіку омніканальної взаємодії зі споживачами. Встановлено, що інтеграція економіки вражень, принципів сталого розвитку та цифрових технологій сприяє підвищенню довіри, емпатії та лояльності споживачів.

Ключові слова: FMCG-бренди, економіка вражень, цифровий маркетинг, імерсійний клієнтський досвід, бренд-архітектура, сталий розвиток, соціальна відповідальність, брендинг, бренд-менеджмент, омніканальні комунікації, роздрібна торгівля, мережі супермаркетів.

JEL Classification: M31, O33, L81, I31.

Introduction

The current stage of digital economic development is characterised by a transformation in patterns of interaction between brands and consumers, particularly in the FMCG sector. The widespread adoption of digital technologies is changing the logic of consumer behaviour: the customer experience is shaped through digital marketing communication channels before consumers physically visit a store. Under these conditions, competition between brands shifts from product attributes towards emotional experiences, in line with the concept of the experience economy.

Socio-economic challenges and declining levels of subjective well-being among the population reinforce the role of retail brands in building trust, facilitating social interaction and creating positive emotional experiences. This necessitates a reconsideration of approaches to FMCG brand management based on human-centredness, empathy and inclusivity.

Recent research and publications indicate growing interest among international and Ukrainian scholars in the transformation of FMCG brands in the digital environment, the development of the experience economy and omnichannel interaction with consumers. Contemporary studies view digital marketing as a tool for shaping emotional customer experiences and building consumer trust and loyalty. Naveen Kumar and Janani (2025) examine the influence of customer experience on consumer loyalty to FMCG brands, while Sharmila and Bibiyana (2026), Karthikeyan and Prashanth (2026), and Arya (2026) focus on the role of omnichannel approaches, augmented reality (AR) and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in developing immersive customer experiences and fostering consumer emotional engagement. Publications by Ukrainian scholars address the adaptation of brand strategies and marketing communications to the digital economy and changing consumer behaviour in the FMCG sector. In particular, Penkova et al. (2024),

Chmil and Striuk (2025), and Nazarchuk and Kovalchuk (2025) examine communication personalisation, the resilience of marketing strategies and the role of the emotional dimension of a brand in building consumer trust.

Despite the substantial body of scholarly work, the development of an immersive customer experience for FMCG brands in the digital environment remains insufficiently explored in the context of the experience economy, social interaction and omnichannel marketing communications.

The aim of this article is to synthesise the key characteristics of developing an immersive customer experience for FMCG brands in the digital environment based on the concept of the experience economy. Achieving this aim involves the following main objectives: to investigate the development of an immersive customer experience for FMCG brands in the digital environment in the context of the experience economy and social interaction; to analyse the brand architecture, positioning and social responsibility of the supermarket chains under study as elements of customer experience development; and to synthesise the key features of digital marketing programmes used by FMCG brands and their omnichannel interaction with consumers.

The study is based on the hypothesis that developing an immersive customer experience for FMCG brands in the digital environment within the experience economy, implementing sustainable development principles and using digital technologies in marketing programmes increase consumer trust, emotional engagement and loyalty, thereby enhancing brand competitiveness.

The study employs a systems approach, comparative analysis, analysis and synthesis, content analysis of brand communications, generalisation, and structural and logical analysis and empirical analysis of FMCG brands' marketing programmes. The information base comprises scholarly works by international and Ukrainian researchers in marketing and branding; data from analytics services (Serpstat); findings from international studies (the World Happiness Report, drawing on Gallup data); statistical and marketing data on retail development in Ukraine from the Ukrainian Retail Association (RAU) and other sources; and data from official and management reports, websites and publicly available materials of the FMCG brands under study.

The first section of the main body examines the development of an immersive customer experience for FMCG brands in the digital environment amid the emergence of the experience economy and the growing role of social interaction. It explores the brand architecture, positioning and social responsibility of the supermarket chains under study as elements that shape the customer experience and build consumer trust. The second section systematises FMCG brands' digital marketing programmes according to the 4Cs framework and identifies the specific features of their omnichannel interaction with consumers in the digital environment.

1. Developing an immersive customer experience for FMCG brands in the digital environment

The adoption and development of digital technologies have transformed the customer experience of FMCG brands in retail, as consumers learn about store offerings through websites, mobile applications, social media and other channels before visiting. To attract new customers and retain existing ones amid intensifying competition, stores now need to become retail and entertainment "experience destinations", combining product presentation with excellent service in which employees welcome customers as guests (Bailey & Milligan, 2020, p. 182). This approach is particularly important in Ukraine, given the large number of people experiencing unhappiness. Demonstrating care by providing positive experiences therefore becomes a key factor in stores' success.

According to the World Happiness Report, an annual global happiness ranking based on data from the US polling organisation Gallup, Ukraine ranked 111th out of 147 countries in 2025 (Gallup©, 2025). This represents a decline of 19 places compared with 2023 and six places compared with 2024. In Ukraine, as in other Central and Eastern European countries, older people are less happy than younger people. Declining quality of life and well-being contribute to an increase in dementia cases. According to World Health Organization estimates, the global population aged 65 and over will double by 2050, with the number of people living with dementia projected to reach 139 million. Improving well-being is a significant factor in dementia prevention, contributing to better cognitive health among older people. Addressing this strategic challenge requires coordinated efforts through public policy, community action and business engagement. Stores, as "experience destinations", can contribute to improving the population's overall well-being by taking guests' ages into account, fostering social engagement and providing appropriate experiences and positive emotions within a digital space that encompasses, among other dimensions, physical space and sociocultural relations. This puts into practice the principle of inclusivity in the digital economy as a prerequisite for the emergence of the experience economy.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, increased benevolence has been observed, particularly among Millennials and Generation Z. Social interaction and social support contribute to greater happiness. Brand marketing programmes, particularly in retail, should therefore consider intergenerational interaction among guests, among employees, and between guests and employees. Applying the concept of experience design (Iankovets, 2025, pp. 311–316) also contributes to happiness and improved well-being, supporting brand development and helping to address social problems.

The theme chosen for the World Happiness Report 2025 was caring and sharing (World Happiness Report, 2024). Benevolence, empathy and trust are identified as key factors influencing happiness today (World Happiness Report, 2025). The development of social values and social

interaction worldwide remains central to sustainable development, whose principles are actively implemented by leading brands, including those in retail.

To identify the factors shaping the customer experience of FMCG brands through benevolence, empathy and trust that contribute to customer happiness, five of the strongest FMCG brands in retail were selected. These are supermarket chains whose principal economic activity falls under code 47.11: Retail sale in non-specialised stores with food, beverages or tobacco predominating. The selection was based on competitor websites identified in the digital environment by the Serpstat analytics service. The benchmark was silpo.ua, representing a supermarket chain that explicitly endorses and consistently applies the principles of the experience economy for its customers.

1.1. Brand architecture and positioning of FMCG supermarket chains

The supermarket chains' activities were analysed in terms of positioning, the emotional dimension, key success factors, the implementation of experience economy and sustainable development principles, and marketing programmes in the digital environment (Young & Rubicam Inc., n.d.; Bailey & Milligan, 2020; Robertson, 2022; Robertson, n. d.; Penkova et al., 2024; Marketing Media Review, 2025; Naveen Kumar & Janani, 2025; Nazarchuk & Kovalchuk, 2025; Chmil & Stryuk, 2025; Iankovets, 2025; Sharmila & Bibiyana, 2026; Karthikeyan & Prashanth, 2026; Arya, 2026). The mission, vision, values and positioning of the supermarket chain brands under study are presented in *Table 1*.

At the end of 2025, ATB was Ukraine's largest supermarket chain by number of stores (1.319) and net revenue (UAH 247.384.831 thousand). It is owned by ATB-Market LLC, which is part of the ATB Corporation (Financial indicators of LLC "ATB-MARKET", n. d.). ATB's key success factors are its extensive store network and broad product range, which enable it to compete effectively on price. More recently, the chain's rational positioning as "Ukraine's largest, dynamically growing retail chain" has been complemented by the emotional message "Your favourite store, your favourite brand, your favourite products". This indicates a move towards empathy and trust through the implementation of experience economy principles (Website of LLC "ATB-Market", n. d.).

ATB's closest competitor in terms of sales is the Silpo supermarket chain (Silpo-Food LLC, part of the Fozzy Group trading and industrial group). While ATB positions itself as a discounter, Silpo focuses on a "guest-centred" customer experience and emotional experiences (BrandVoice, 2023; Website of LLC "Silpo-Food", n. d.), which constitute the brand's key success factor. Over 15 years, the chain has brought disparate supermarkets together under a unified brand format, with a mission to create joy and make guests happy. Consequently, its Net Promoter Score (NPS), regularly measured by the Guest Experience Department, consistently exceeds 50, indicating strong customer loyalty.

The distinctive "Vlasnyi Rakhunok" loyalty programme, which combines consumer rewards with an effective research and marketing tool, provided the basis for management's decision to develop a data platform that would enable personalised offers at individually tailored prices for guests. Furthermore, the brand's concept of creating designer supermarkets in different styles is unique worldwide, with more than 100 such stores to date.

For a long time, the "Novus" brand, owned by Novus Ukraine LLC, was characterised by a rational approach to positioning, as reflected in its stated Mission and Values (n. d.). Convenience, accessibility and usefulness are prioritised. The brand's positioning reflects the national characteristics associated with its principal investor, the Lithuanian holding company BT Invest: rationality, seriousness, practicality and technological sophistication. These are manifested in the application of European quality standards and a transparent and responsible approach to business. The brand is well known and recognisable, but until recently it lacked the emotional dimension needed to build lasting positive associations and an immersive customer experience, which directly contribute to expanding its loyal audience and bringing the brand closer to lovemark status.

Today, the brand complements its slogan "Worthy of Your Trust" with "We Do It Because We Love It", echoing "Silpo", which regards "Novus" as its main competitor in the upper-middle price segment (Share Ua Potential, n. d.). "Silpo" regularly expresses its love for guests (SilpoLovesYou), employees and even competitors. One example was its campaign ahead of Valentine's Day in 2021, featuring personalised slogans on billboards near competitors' stores: "ATB, We Love You", "Novus, You Energise Us", "Fora, Our Love for You Goes Without Saying", "Varus, You Put Wind in Our Sails", and others (24|TV channel Kyiv, 2021). Such expressions of humanity attract attention, create emotional experiences and foster positive associations and feelings.

Over the past two years, "Novus" brand communications have become more emotional, open and "warm", reflecting a shift in positioning: "…to be even more convenient and closer to you", "We Believe Good Deeds Change the World!", "At Novus, We Believe in the Power of Dreams", and "Our Magic Is Creating Quality Products You Fall in Love With", among others. Customer orientation is becoming the foundation of the corporate culture at "Novus" (Osijek, 2025; Website of Novus Ukraine LLC, n. d.).

The "Fora" brand (Fora LLC, part of Fozzy Group) positions itself as "a chain of modern grocery stores close to home that continues to improve and grow, offering a balanced product range and optimal value for money". Overall, the rational positioning elements of "balance" and "optimal value" demonstrate an honest approach to customer relations, while the emotional dimension of "close to home" evokes associations with proximity and trust. The brand's positioning is further complemented by the emotional message "Care in Action", which was reinforced through the rebranding of "Fora" in summer 2024 (RAU, 2024). The brand's key success factor is its distinctive approach to opening welcoming, easily accessible stores in every neighbourhood, in locations where people can shop conveniently and comfortably (Website of LLC "FORA", n. d.).

Table 1

Mission, vision, values and positioning of the supermarket chain brands under study

Supermarket chains	Mission	Vision	Values	Positioning
ATB	Providing Ukraine's population with quality food products and essential non-food goods at the lowest prices	Creating a comprehensive "ATB" ecosystem for customers, encompassing all modern services and technologies: from fintech projects, loyalty programmes and online shopping to co-branding projects with partners across various industries	Safety, stability, effectiveness. A focus on results, professional development, adherence to corporate standards and a high level of responsibility among all employees	"Convenient and economical!" A discounter offering a wide product range at fair prices – the "ATB" Corporation's own retail format. Maximum quality at the lowest price
Silpo	Creating joy. Making guests happy	A place of joy, emotions and gastronomic discoveries. Creating experiences that guests will want to return for	Innovation – generating new ideas, embracing boldness and experimentation. A cohesive team – shared goals, successes and setbacks, mutual support and development. Motivation – treating employees with the same care as Guests and supporting work–life balance. Honesty, openness and trust – trusting colleagues and keeping promises. Hospitality – knowing and understanding Guests and delighting them. Joy – knowing how to have fun and daring to be playful and laugh at ourselves. Sustainable development – waste reduction and disposal, and efficient resource use. Continuous development – striving to grow and learn from best practices	"Silpo is about creating joy". An exciting experience – the atmosphere and design aim to exceed Guests' expectations and turn visits into a true gastronomic journey. A distinctive, Guest-oriented product range designed to delight. Personalised service in the chain's supermarkets, food courts and food halls – bringing Guests sincere smiles and genuine conversations
Novus	Making shopping convenient, accessible and beneficial for each of us	To be a retail leader	Care – our customers are our focus. We immerse ourselves in their experiences, identifying areas that need attention and improvement. Only a professional team can make this possible, so we create opportunities for every employee to grow and develop. Reliability – we are a reliable partner and employer with international experience: honest, stable and dependable. Rationality – common sense in everything we do	As the chain has developed, its positioning has shifted from "Novus Is Worthy of Your Trust", based on European rationality, practicality and technological sophistication, to "We Do It Because We Love It", reflecting an identified customer need for benevolence and empathy under current conditions. Novus positions itself as a Ukrainian business that does everything with love for its audience and its country, while caring for its employees, its customers and itself

End of Table 1

Supermarket chains	Mission	Vision	Values	Positioning
Fora	Ensuring food affordability and physical accessibility	Opening welcoming stores in every neighbourhood, where people can shop conveniently and comfortably	Service orientation – creating comfort by caring for everyone. Fostering human-centredness, where every Guest and SuperFora team member matters. Reliability – ensuring transparency in relationships with Guests, Partners and SuperFora team members. Innovation – developing a culture that encourages and supports ideas for sustainable business development. Productivity – working in synergy to deliver effective, clear solutions while maintaining work–life balance	"Fora Is Care in Action". Nearby, close to home, just a few steps away. Fora is care in action, so its stores are located wherever they are most convenient for every Guest: in a neighbouring building for quick purchases of essential groceries; along a main road for a stop on the way home; and in small towns and villages where local residents previously had no opportunity to buy fresh food close to home
Varus	Improving Ukrainians' lives and making them a little happier. Becoming our Customers' favourite store by solving their problems every day and anticipating their expectations	Satisfying customers with a wide selection of products at affordable and attractive prices by developing e-commerce, expanding the coverage of our own delivery service and scaling up online ordering	Teamwork – we are a team committed to shared results and mutual assistance. Expertise – we believe that each of us is an expert in our field. Effectiveness – every step we take serves the ultimate result. Efficiency – we use the company's resources efficiently and rationally. Support – we value what we do for one another and take pride in our achievements. Innovation – we generate ideas and seek unconventional solutions	"Food Variety Every Day!" Combating culinary monotony. Culinary variety for every customer, using everyday ingredients

Source: developed by the author.

All the supermarket chains under study consciously develop their brand identities and ensure that their brand images remain relevant to contemporary conditions, either by changing their positioning or by strengthening its emotional dimension. This is driven by a contemporary consumer trend identified in this study and corroborated by other research: the need for positive emotions (Retailers, 2026), which is consistent with the principles of the experience economy. Unlike "ATB", "Silpo", "Novus" and "Fora", discussed above, the "Varus" supermarket chain (Omega LLC) has introduced the character "Varusiatko" into its brand identity, creating a strong association with the brand that helps differentiate it from competitors. The chain's objective is to "satisfy customers with a wide selection of products at affordable and attractive prices", while its positioning is expressed as "Shop with Us for Comfort and Value!" (Varus website (LLC "OMEGA"), n. d.).

Overall, "Varus" communicates a more rational approach to customer interaction, emphasising value for money. At the same time, the brand's mission is to "improve Ukrainians' lives and make them a little happier" by promoting the concept of "Food Variety Every Day" and offering "culinary variety for every customer, using everyday ingredients". To promote the "VARUS" brand and its private label "Varto", the chain collaborated with the well-known culinary expert Yevhen Klopotenko between 2020 and 2022, incorporating his image into the packaging design of products sold under this label. As part of the collaboration, the expert supported Ukrainians at every stage of food preparation, starting with the selection of "Varto" products in supermarkets. He shared recommendations for preparing dishes with these products on social media, held masterclasses for "Varus" customers, including in supermarkets, and published an exclusive book for the chain's customers, "Borshch and What to Serve with It", as part of a marketing campaign, among other activities. Yevhen Klopotenko's image resonates with the chain's target audience and aligns with its brand personality. This collaboration also reflects the principles of the experience economy by engaging customers in developing national consciousness through the preparation of national dishes, thereby fostering a positive immersive customer experience.

These characteristics of the brand architecture and positioning of FMCG supermarket chain brands reflect both their strategic development priorities and the value systems through which they build customer relationships in the digital environment. However, the contemporary customer experience is shaped not only by communication messages and brand image but also by actual business practices, expressed through social responsibility and the implementation of sustainable development principles. The following analysis therefore examines how FMCG brands' economic, social and environmental initiatives are integrated into the customer experience and strengthen its immersive character, building trust, empathy and long-term customer loyalty.

1.2. Social responsibility and sustainable development of FMCG brands in shaping the customer experience

Within the framework of sustainable development, ATB-Market LLC harmoniously combines economic and social initiatives, through low prices and regular discounts for the country's residents, with environmental initiatives. These include the use of energy-efficient LED lighting systems and alternative energy solutions, such as solar panels, inverters, battery packs and solar carports; phasing out harmful plastic and replacing it with bags containing a patented biodegradable component and bags made from corn starch; introducing a specially designed heat recovery system that captures heat generated by refrigeration equipment and uses it for heating; and switching to reusable pooled containers, among other measures. In 2023, ATB's positioning was complemented by the message "a network of Ukrainian resilience, a stronghold of the country's food security". During the war, ATB-Market LLC has donated more than UAH 2 billion to the Armed Forces of Ukraine, medical institutions, rescue services and affected communities (Website of LLC "ATB-Market", n.d.; Symonenko, 2026).

The environmental initiatives implemented by the "Silpo" supermarket chain as part of its sustainable development approach include (Silpo-Food LLC, 2025): a project for the separate collection of recyclable materials; a battery collection initiative for recycling in partnership with the nationwide environmental movement "Batteries, Surrender!" (involving all the brands under study and other well-known Ukrainian retail brands); phasing out refrigeration equipment that uses greenhouse gases (HFC refrigerants), the largest source of carbon emissions in the retail sector, and replacing it with equipment that uses carbon dioxide (CO_2) as a refrigerant; introducing a "Do Not Print a Paper Receipt" option in the updated mobile application, since paper receipts are rarely recycled owing to the presence of bisphenol A in thermal paper (the initiative's slogan is "Our Planet Is Better Off Without Receipts"); and environmentally friendly initiatives encouraging guests to shop without plastic bags by using reusable shopping bags and mesh bags for fruit and vegetables, and to buy coffee in their own cups, among other measures.

Silpo-Food LLC employees, known as "Perevershnyky" ("those who exceed expectations"), have access to career development and training programmes. The company also maintains its own YouTube channel with training videos. Additional employee benefits include health and life insurance, gym access, language courses and employee discounts. An employee support centre and numerous other programmes are also available. An analysis of these initiatives demonstrates an equally caring approach to external customers – guests – and internal customers – employees.

The brand has shifted its positioning from the market for goods and services to the market for experiences. It consistently fulfils its stated commitment to making people happy and creating joy, establishing itself as a benchmark among the companies under study for implementing experience

economy principles and moving towards lovemark status among loyal guests and employees. Notably, "Silpo" does not calculate the return on investment in its designer supermarkets, describing their creation as retailtainment – providing experiences in retail through entertainment. Management explains this approach through its belief that an emotionally engaging offering delivers strong financial performance (BrandVoice, 2023). This expresses love for guests and trust, generating emotions and strengthening their connection with the brand.

As a result of implementing experience economy principles and systematically working towards lovemark status among its guests, the "Silpo" supermarket chain has also gained recognition from industry peers. For several consecutive years, including 2025, it has won the "FMCG Supermarket of the Year" category at the Ukrainian Retail Association's RAU Awards (Symonenko, 2025).

In 2025, the social responsibility of "Novus" as a dimension of sustainable development was characterised by increased investment in energy independence, support initiatives and employer brand development. Amid energy challenges, Novus Ukraine LLC invested UAH 385 million in ensuring uninterrupted operations across the chain, including generators, backup power sources and the development of its own solar power generation (Business News from Ukraine, 2025). By the end of 2025, the company planned to have 15 sites operating with its own solar power systems, with a total capacity of 3.34 MW, and to implement a Building Management System (BMS) for remotely managing stores' energy consumption. The company also purchased its first corporate electric vehicles to reduce its carbon footprint and continues to develop environmentally oriented technological solutions (Business News from Ukraine, 2025).

The social dimension of the brand's sustainable development is implemented through support for the population and the development of its corporate culture. Since the start of the full-scale war, "Novus", together with the Food for Ukraine charitable foundation, has systematically provided assistance to Ukrainian families and communities, fostering a socially responsible model of interaction between business and society. At the same time, the company continues to develop its employer brand: in 2025, the chain was included in Delo.ua's list of Ukraine's top 100 employers for the second time, while its Human Resources Director, Kateryna Tsybur, was named among the country's top 15 HR directors (Troyanov, 2025). Through large-scale charitable projects, the chain raised more than UAH 200 million in 2025 for food, medical equipment and other assistance for the population, as well as for the needs of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

The increased focus on energy efficiency, environmental sustainability, employee well-being and community support indicates the transformation of "Novus" from predominantly rational positioning towards a human-centred model of interaction with customers and employees. This approach aligns with contemporary trends in the development of the experience economy, in which social responsibility, empathy and care

become important factors in building trust, creating positive customer experiences and fostering long-term loyalty to an FMCG brand.

Brand health tracking conducted by "Novus", covering brand awareness, image characteristics and category-specific attributes, revealed changes in Ukrainians' values during the war. Customers have become more rational in their purchasing decisions and more attentive to prices and promotions (Osijek, 2025). At the same time, everyone in Ukraine today is experiencing loss and has a subconscious need for empathy from others. By demonstrating humanity, benevolence and empathy in their positioning, initiatives and everyday actions, brands can therefore create and sustain positive experiences for both external and internal customers, build and maintain trust, and address the economic, social and environmental objectives of sustainable development.

In implementing sustainable development principles, the "Fora" supermarket chain continues to integrate environmental, social and governance practices into its business model. The company promotes energy efficiency and energy independence, upgrades stores' building services systems, introduces modern heat recovery technologies and continues to use photovoltaic installations to meet part of its energy needs. As part of its environmental policy, the chain supports separate waste collection, reduced plastic use, the digitalisation of document workflows and the development of electric vehicle infrastructure. Improving the energy efficiency of retail premises and ensuring uninterrupted store operations amid energy challenges remain important priorities (Website of LLC "FORA", n. d.).

The social dimension of the "Fora" brand's sustainable development is implemented through a human-centred corporate culture and support for employees, whom the company calls "SuperFora team members". Following the refresh of the overall "Fora" brand, its employer brand was also refreshed, reinforcing its positioning as "Work That People Need" (Osijek, 2024). In 2025, the chain became the largest employer in the Kyiv region, with more than 9,000 employees, demonstrating the scale of the brand's social role in the region (Fixygen.ua, 2026). The company develops employment programmes for veterans, young people and people with disabilities, supports internal career pathways and continues to invest in staff training, the development of a service culture and the digitalisation of HR processes. As part of its employer brand development, "Fora" places increasing emphasis on job security, health insurance, employee support programmes delivered through partnerships, corporate training and the creation of a comfortable working environment. The company actively introduces digital solutions to optimise business processes and internal communication, contributing to more effective management and an improved employee experience (Website of LLC "FORA", n. d.; Dudka, 2026).

Thus, "Fora" is gradually shifting its positioning from a chain of stores "close to home" towards a socially responsible FMCG brand that creates positive customer experiences through care, accessibility, service orientation and social interaction. Implementing sustainable development principles in

combination with digital technologies helps build trust, emotional attachment and long-term loyalty among both external and internal customers of the brand.

In implementing sustainable development principles, the "Varus" supermarket chain (Omega LLC) continues to integrate environmental initiatives into its development strategy and operations. The company invests in energy-saving projects; processes food waste and products of animal origin through specialist licensed processors; replaces fluorescent lamps with LEDs; has introduced a system that recovers heat from refrigeration equipment to heat sales areas and provide hot water; has implemented an energy management system; has replaced Freon in its cooling systems with an environmentally safe refrigerant; has installed sensor-operated taps to conserve water and motion sensors to save electricity; and offers customers reusable shopping bags, biodegradable bags and paper bags.

The company's social responsibility is reflected in a set of corporate competencies expected of all employees, regardless of their position: customer orientation, openness to new ideas, flexibility, teamwork and initiative. Career progression opportunities are available, with 52% of vacancies for administrative positions filled from the internal talent pool. "Varus" offers work placement programmes for university students. An employee motivation system is in place, alongside programmes for internal and external training and professional development. In addition, "Varus" is expanding its digital services and process automation: the chain is developing its mobile application, loyalty programmes, Scan&Go services, electronic receipts and personalised offers, combining functional benefits with the creation of positive customer experiences in the digital environment (Varus website (LLC "OMEGA"), n. d.).

The synthesis of the research findings indicates that contemporary FMCG brands are transforming sustainable development from an additional area of activity into an integral component of the customer experience and digital positioning. Energy efficiency, environmental initiatives, employee support, charitable projects, employer brand development and empathy in communications create both functional brand value and an emotional connection with consumers, strengthening trust, loyalty and companies' competitive advantages in the digital environment.

The identified values, principles of interaction and human-centred approach of the FMCG brands under study are further reflected in the supermarket chains' marketing programmes and digital communications.

2. Marketing programmes of FMCG brands in the digital environment

As part of the investigation into FMCG brand positioning based on the principles of the experience economy and sustainable development, each brand's distinctiveness was analysed in terms of the visual expression of its

stated mission, values and positioning (*Table 1*), as well as its communications based on brand personality (*Table 2*). The analysis draws on Carl Gustav Jung's concept of psychological archetypes (Jung, 2024), first applied to marketing by Margaret Mark and Carol S. Pearson in their book "The Hero and the Outlaw: Building Extraordinary Brands Through the Power of Archetypes" (Mark & Pearson, 2001). The concept of brand archetypes is now widely used. It enables brands to develop a coherent system of emotional positioning, establish a recognisable style of integrated marketing communications, ensure consistency between the visual and semantic elements of branding, and strengthen emotional connections with consumers in the digital environment.

Table 2

Brand personality of the supermarket chains under study

FMCG brand		Archetype		Positioning	Tone of Voice
ATB		Primary	Caregiver	Service and belonging	Caring and straightforward
		Secondary	Everyman		
Silpo		Primary	Magician	The magical power of innovation and creativity	Humorous
		Secondary	Creator		
Novus	NOVUS	Primary	Hero	Masterful service	Supportive and intellectual
		Secondary	Caregiver		
Fora	фора	Primary	Everyman	Care	Friendly
		Secondary	Caregiver		
Varus	VARUS	Primary	Innocent	Safe entertainment and fun	Playful
		Secondary	Jester		

Source: developed by the author.

The initiatives and activities shared by the supermarket chains under study are shaped by the specific nature of retail operations and contemporary consumer needs and behaviour, requiring attention to improving the immersive experience of both external and internal customers. In particular, all the brands have private labels, import products directly, actively participate in charitable initiatives, develop micro-brands for initiatives and projects, implement sustainable development principles, and actively introduce technological innovations into business processes and digital marketing technologies into customer interaction. They also operate online stores, mobile applications and delivery services, and develop loyalty programmes.

Table 3 compares the marketing programmes of the supermarket chain brands under study according to the core digital marketing tools of the 4Cs framework, which considers brands' presence in the digital environment alongside the traditional 4Ps.

Table 3

Comparison of digital marketing programmes of the supermarket chain brands under study

Marketing tools (4Cs)	Supermarket chains				
	Silpo	ATB	Novus	Fora	Varus
Type of economic activity	47.11 Retail sale in non-specialised stores with food, beverages or tobacco predominating				
Products (private labels)	Fozzy Group private labels: "Premiia", Premiya Select, "Povna Chasha", Riki Tiki. Silpo private labels: Kraftiar, Zelena Kraina, feels good	"De Luxe Foods & Goods Selected" – upper price segment; "Svoia Liniia" – middle price segment; "Rozumnyi Vybir" – lower price segment; "Den u Den" – between the middle and lower price segments	Novus, Marka Promo	Promo Fozzy Group private labels: "Premiia", "Povna Chasha", Riki Tiki. Fora private labels: "Zirkovyi Vybir" – middle price segment; favore – premium price segment	"Chysta VyhoDA" – economy segment; "Domashnii Koshyk", "VARTO", "Vyhoda" – lowest prices; Varto Soft, Varto Clean, BOHEMA, Origin, Trixi
Core price segment	Upper-middle	Low	Upper-middle	Middle	Middle
Online sales channels	Official online store silpo.ua	Official online store atbmarket.com	Official online store novus.ua; grocery delivery service from hypermarkets zakaz.ua	Official online store shop.fora.ua	Official online store varus.ua; go.varus.ua service; Varus Pick-up Point service
Offline sales channels	Silpo and LeSilpo supermarkets; designer supermarkets with distinctive styles; an innovative shop-in-shop format in collaboration with MVM My Home	The ATB Corporation's own store format – discounters	Novus supermarkets; "Mi Market" minimarkets; two "Khapaika" discounters	Fora supermarkets; to-go formats; Fora Express	Varus supermarkets; Varus Home formats; a DarkStore in Kyiv; to-go formats; "a store close to home"
Online promotional tools	Website; mobile application; social media: YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X; messaging platforms: Telegram, Viber; TikTok collaborations; dating website; mobile games; user-generated content (UGC); executive interviews published on online platforms	Website; ATB-Market mobile application; social media: YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, X; Viber and Telegram chatbots; ATB Arena gaming application	Website; mobile application; social media: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube; opinion leaders	Website; mobile application; social media: YouTube, Facebook, Instagram; Telegram messaging platform	Website; mobile application; bots; SMS; messaging platforms: Telegram, Viber, Facebook Messenger; social media: Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube

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End of Table 3

Marketing tools (4Cs)	Supermarket chains				
	Silpo	ATB	Novus	Fora	Varus
Online advertising	Video advertising on YouTube and Meta social media platforms; banner advertising; brand image and promotional campaigns	Video advertising on YouTube; banner advertising; price-based and thematic promotional campaigns	Video advertising on YouTube and online platforms; brand image campaigns and price offers	Video advertising on YouTube and Meta social media platforms; brand image and promotional campaigns	Video advertising on YouTube and Meta social media platforms; brand image and promotional campaigns
Online advertising objectives	Building an emotional connection with the brand; engaging a young target audience; promoting shop.silpo.ua, delivery, the LOKO delivery service, the PLIUKHS subscription, brand projects, offers for Guests and job opportunities, among others	Increasing the number of active social media followers; expanding reach; combating fake content (Facebook, Instagram, Telegram); increasing brand awareness; strengthening loyalty	Increasing brand awareness among the target audience; improving brand image attributes; attracting new customers; increasing market share; achieving performance outcomes (website visits, subscriptions, leads and sales)	Brand image and conversion objectives: announcing new store openings; promoting the mobile application, the shop.fora.ua online store and free delivery, the training school, ForaCafe, discounts in physical stores, price offers and the benefits of working at "Fora", among others	Promoting special offers and discounts on YouTube; increasing brand awareness on social media; promoting the mobile application and delivery
Offline promotional tools	"Silpo" radio; collaborations; themed projects; gastronomic festivals; charitable events; performances and workshops within the Festerudze project; tasting workshops; teaching by the Marketing Director on educational programmes; integration of art into creative events	Billboards; television and radio advertising; collaborations with the entertainment industry; product placement; in-store audio advertising	Presentations by Novus executives at business forums; participation in charitable events; television, metro and outdoor advertising; in-store radio; employee ambassadors; in-store communications	Charitable events; rebranding; outdoor advertising; radio; in-store campaign materials, including price labels, shelf stoppers, audio and video content	Interviews with the chain's co-founder and participation in business conferences; mass media; collaborations; workshops, including in supermarkets; charitable campaigns

Source: developed by the author.

The comparison of digital marketing programmes of the FMCG brands under study indicates a high level of digitalisation in communications and omnichannel interaction with consumers. However, each chain implements its own marketing model according to its price segment, positioning and chosen brand archetype. Brands in the middle and premium segments (Silpo, Novus) emphasise emotional customer experiences, immersive communication formats, brand projects and community building around the brand, whereas discounters and mass-market brands (ATB, Fora, Varus) focus on value propositions, service orientation, accessibility and sales promotion through digital channels.

The findings confirm that contemporary digital marketing of FMCG brands extends beyond product promotion and is evolving into a system for developing a comprehensive customer experience that combines functional value, emotional interaction, social responsibility and digital technologies.

Conclusions

The contemporary development of FMCG brands in the digital environment is characterised by a shift from a product-oriented to an experience-oriented model based on an immersive customer experience. This experience is shaped within the experience economy, where emotional experiences, social interaction and digital communications become decisive, confirming the proposed hypothesis.

The brand architecture and positioning of the supermarket chains under study reflect different strategic models of consumer interaction and demonstrate a gradual strengthening of the emotional dimension in their communication policies. Social responsibility and sustainable development principles are important factors in building trust, fostering empathy and creating positive customer experiences in the digital environment.

Digital marketing programmes of FMCG brands are evolving towards omnichannel integration and personalised consumer interaction through digital marketing tools and the 4Cs framework. Combining the experience economy, digital technologies and socially responsible practices enhances the quality of the customer experience, increases consumer loyalty and subjective well-being, and thereby strengthens brand competitiveness.

Promising directions for further research include an in-depth analysis of how brands influence the development of immersive customer experiences and consumer behaviour; the development of appropriate methods for evaluating the effectiveness of marketing communications in the digital environment; and an examination of the role of social interaction and sustainable development principles in enhancing the emotional value of FMCG brands.

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